

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 1228

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, MA, NO, YO,BU
SUBJ: BACKGROUND ON YUGOSLAV AND BULGARIAN "MERCENERIES" IN
MADAGASCAR

REF: A) ANT 1216; B) DAO ANT IR 68600047-77

1. THE TWO "MERCENARIES" WHOM PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA MENTIONED IN
HIS DEPARTURE STATEMENT FOR MOSCOW ARE ACTUALLY TWO STOWAWAYS
WHO LANDED HERE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO. THE BULGARIAN AND THE YUGOSLAV
IN QUESTION, LITTLE MORE THAN DRIFTERS, STOWED AWAY ABOARD A
SCANDINAVIAN FLAG VESSEL IN MARSEILLES, BELIEVING IT BOUND FOR
SCANDINAVIA. INSTEAD THEY FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.
THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED OFF THE SHIP IN MAURITIUS BUT GAVE A PRESS
INTERVIEW THERE REFERRING TO THEMSELVES AS POLITICAL REFUGEES
FROM THEIR ALLEGED HOME COUNTRIES
--ACTUALLY NEITHER MAN HAS ANY PAPERS ESTABLISHING HIS NATIONALITY.
THE SHIP'S OWNERS HAD INTENDED TO KEEP THEM ABOARD UNTIL ITS RETURN
TO EUROPE WHERE THE MATTER COULD BE REFERRED TO THE UN HIGH COMMIS-
SIONER FOR REFUGEES. INSTEAD THE TWO MEN MANAGED TO ELUDE AUTHOR-
ITIES IN TAMATAVE AND BEGAN A RAMBLING TOUR OF MADAGASCAR.
IN A PROVINCIAL CITY BAR, THEY WERE BEFRIENDED BY TWO YOUNG
FRENCHMEN, ONE OF WHOM LATER LOANED HIS APARTMENT TO THE FUGITIVES.
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UPON FINDING HIS APARTMENT RIFLED, THE FRENCHMAN REPORTED HIS LOSS
TO THE MALAGASY POLICE, WHEREUPON LOCAL AUTHORITIES FIRST BECAME
AWARE OF THE STOWAWAYS'S PRESENCE IN MADAGASCAR. BOTH FRENCHMEN
WERE EXTENSIVELY INTERROGATED AND FINALLY RELEASED: AFTER
PASSING A NUMBER OF FORGED, STOLEN CHECKS AT THE MADAGASCAR
HILTON, THE TWO FUGITIVES WERE ARRESTED.

2. THE ONLY FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVE IN ANTANANARIVO INTERESTED IN THE CASE OF THESE PRISONERS IS THE NORWEGIAN HONORARY CONSUL, GUNNAR HEFFERMEHL, AGENT FOR THE SHIP WHICH BROUGHT THEM IN. THERE IS NO BULGARIAN REPRESENTATION HERE AND THE YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR HAS STAYED AWAY, SAYING THE OTHER MAN IS EITHER NOT A YUGOSLAV OR, IF SO, HIS CLAIM TO BE A POLITICAL REFUGEE EXEMPTS THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT FROM RESPONSIBILITY. A DANISH MATE SERVING ON A NORWEGIAN COASTER SERVING MADAGASCAR IS UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ANTANANARIVO FOR HAVING HAD SOME CONTACT WITH THE TWO PRISONERS.

3. ACCORDING TO HEFFERMEHL,WHO HAS SERVED AS INTERPRETER AT SOME OF THE INTERROGATION SESSIONS OF THE TWO PRISONERS, THEIR TREATMENT HAS BEEN BRUTAL. ONE OF THE PRISONERS TOLD HIM IN AN ASIDE THAT HE WAS CONTEMPLATING SUICIDE, AS HE COULD NO LONGER TAKE THE QUESTIONING, ACCOMPANIED AS IT WAS WITH ELECTRIC PRODDERS. RATSIRAKA, IN HIS JUNE 28 PRESS INTERVIEW, SAID THAT ONE OF THE MEN HAD TWICE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE, CITING THIS AS EVIDENCE THAT THE MEN WERE NOT WHAT THEY CLAIM TO BE FOR "POLITICAL REFUGEES HAVE NO REASON TO COMMIT SUICIDE." RATSIRAKA HAS ALSO DENIGRATED THE MEN'S CLAIM TO BE REFUGEES BY POINTING OUT THAT IT IS STRANGE FOR REFUGEES FROM SOCIALIST REGIMES TO TAKE REFUGE IN ANOTHER SOCIALIST COUNTRY.

4. PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA TOLD THE PRESS JUNE 28 THAT IT WAS HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT "THE SUPPOSED BULGARIAN AND YUGOSLAV ARE MERCENARIES CONFIDENTIAL

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SENT TO KILL SOME MALAGASY CURRENTLY IN DETENTION. YOU KNOW THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME ATTEMPTS TO FORMENT TROUBLE, SOME PLOTS HERE IN MADAGASCAR AND THAT THREE OF OUR OFFICERS WERE MIXED UP IN IT. THEY ARE NOW IN DETENTION. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE IMPERIALISTS,THE OFFICERS ASKED THE GOVERNMENT'S PARDON AND HAVE GIVEN US ALL THE DETAILS OF THE PLOT, INCLUDING THE NAMES, THE INS-AND-OUTS OF THE ENTIRE AFFAIR AND THE COUNTRIES AND THE FOREIGNERS WHO INCITED THEM IN THE AFFAIR.AND I THINK THAT IF THE MERCENARIES CAME HERE AND TRIED TO GET THEMSELVES THROWN IN PRISON, IT IS PRECISELY IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE MALAGASY (MEMBERS OF THE PLOT) ... IN ORDER TO PREVENT A TRIAL AND THE ATTENDANT REVELATIONS AND INculpATIONS.

5. PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA THEN DISPLAYED A PEN-GUN WHICH HE CLAIMED HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM THE "MERCENARIES," ALONG WITH TRANSCEIVERS AND SNIPER RIFLES.

6. THE THREE MALAGASY OFFICERS WHOM THE PRESIDENT HAS CHOSEN TO LINK WITH THE TWO FOREIGNERS WERE AMONG APPROXIMATELY TEN ARRESTED IN OCTOBER 1977 FOR PLOTTING TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT. THE LEADER OF THE GROUP WAS ALLEGEDLY GENDARMERIE MAJOR RICHARD HYGIN ANDRIAMAHOLISON, BRIEFLY MINISTER OF INFORMATION

AND TOURISM APPOINTED BY THE LATE PRESIDENT RATSIMANDRAVA AND
SUBSEQUENTLY MEMBER OF THE MILITARY DIRECTORY WHICH RULED FOLLOWING
RATSIMANDRAVA'S ASSASSINATION AND, UNTIL HIS ARREST, TECHNICAL
ADVISER TO THE COMMANDER OF THE NATIONAL GENDARMERIE.

7. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA PREVIOUSLY HAD
PUBLICLY LINKED THE AMERICAN EDMUND LAPPEMAN AND HIS TWO SOUTH
AFRICAN
COLLEAGUES WITH ANTI-REGIME PLOTS. FOR REASONS UNKNOWN, THIS ALLEGED
CONNECTION WAS NOT MENTIONED BY THE PROSECUTION IN THE TRIAL
OF THE FORMER THREE. THE PRESIDENT SEEMS BOUND AND DETERMINED TO
DEMONSTRATE THE COMPLICITY OF THE THREE MALAGASY OFFICERS IN
SOMEBODY'S INTERNATIONAL PLOT AGAINST MADAGASCAR.
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